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ABSTRACT

Currently bilingual and multiethnic instruction, which are emerging as highly significant educational thrusts, are not disparate forces. Since both promote ethnic pluralism, the difference between them is one of degree rather than kind. This difference can be modified by adding a multiethnic dimension to bilingual-bicultural education, thereby permeating it with multiethnic experiences. In this conceptual framework, bilingual-multiethnic instruction can minimize the severity of the transition Mexican American students experience when beginning school because it reflects the student's home environment and culture which are mediated through the student's dominant language. Also this framework serves to expand the student's ethnic perspective with intragroup and intergroup diversity strands. The intragroup diversity strand exposes students to the human, ethnic, and racial diversity of the Mexican American culture, while the intergroup diversity strand exposes them to the human, racial and ethnic diversity existent in American society. In this framework, the Mexican American culture should be the base of the bilingual-bicultural program, mediated through the student's dominant language. Also the study of Mexican American culture should be expanded to teach students its intragroup diversity, while the study of Anglo American culture should be expanded to teach students the intergroup diversity of American society. This paper also lists 20 resources suggesting ways and means by which a multiethnic dimension can be utilized by bilingual-bicultural programs. (Author/NQ)

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THE MULTIETHNIC DIMENSION OF BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATION

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May 1978

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THE MULTIETHNIC DIMENSION OF BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATION

Bilingual and multiethnic instruction are emerging as highly significant educational thrusts. Vying for a legitimate place on the educational market, both movements are challenging melting pot, assimilationist notions that have long dominated public education. Unfortunately the danger exists that bilingual and multiethnic education will become disparate forces, competing against each other in an educational market place that has limited resources and even less patience with two seemingly duplicative programs.[1]

Currently, they are not disparate forces. They provide equal educational opportunities for ethnic minority students by focusing on the study of ethnic groups in the United States. Both promote ethnic pluralism -- i.e., the school should encourage rather than ignore or disparage linguistic and ethnic diversity. Thus the difference between bilingual-bicultural and multiethnic education is one of degree rather than kind. Bilingual-bicultural instruction focuses specifically on the study of two languages and two ethnic group cultures, while multiethnic instruction focuses generically on the study of ethnicity and identifiable ethnic groups in the United States.

I propose that we modify this difference by adding a multiethnic dimension to bilingual-bicultural education and thereby permeate it with multiethnic

experiences. The following framework, guidelines, and resources suggest ways and means by which a multiethnic dimension can be utilized by bilingual-bicultural programs. While I will refer to Mexican American students and culture, these suggestions should be applicable to the bilingual-bicultural programs of other linguistic groups.

Multiethnic Framework for Bilingual Education

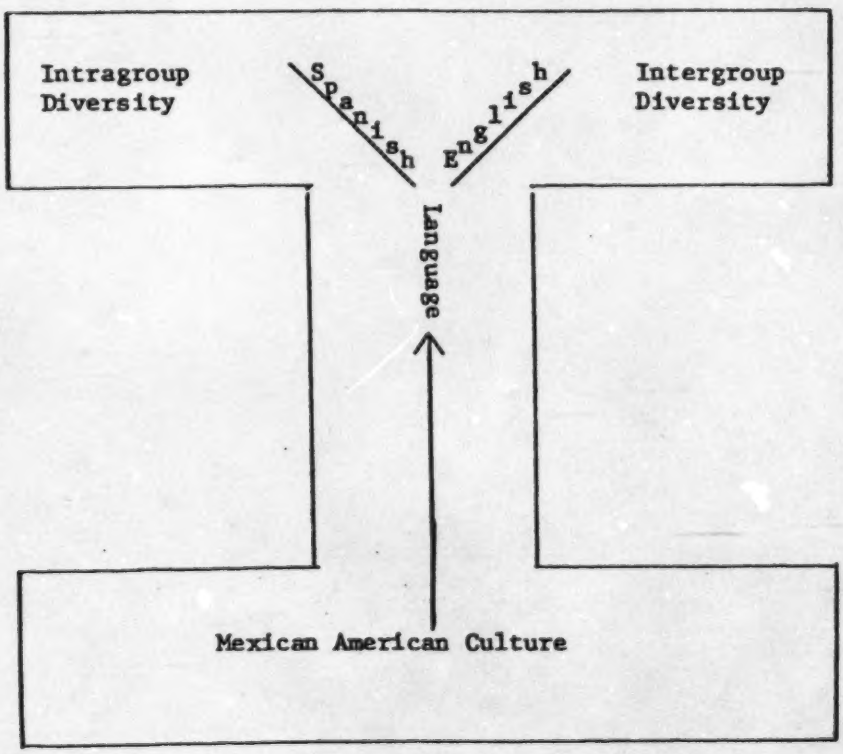
We should not forget that the fundamental purpose of bilingual-bicultural education is to create a school environment which is compatible with the student's home environment. Such an environment allows Mexican American students to enter school without feelings of rejection. Today, as in the past, many Mexican Americans experience a harsh transition when they begin school by entering an Anglo curriculum mediated through the English language.[2] The transition is harsh in proportion to the degree the student's culture and language differ from the Anglo culture which is embedded in the English language curriculum.

In the conceptual framework that I am suggesting (see Figure 1), bilingual-multiethnic instruction minimizes the severity of the transition because it reflects the Mexican American student's home environment and culture which are mediated through the student's dominant language. Consequently the kindergarten or first grade environment is less threatening to the student because it reflects rather than rejects or omits Mexican American culture. Also, the "I" framework serves to expand the student's ethnic perspective with intragroup and intergroup diversity strands.

The intragroup diversity strand exposes students to the human, ethnic, and racially diversity of Mexican American culture. Vasconcelos described

Figure 1

"I" Framework for Multiethnic
Dimension of Bilingual Instruction



Mexican American culture as la rasa cosmica, i.e., a synthesis of many races and cultures: Anglo, Asian, Black, and Native American.[3] The strand provides students with a perspective to counter biases and stereotypes regarding Mexican Americans, because the culture is treated as a heterogeneous rather than as a homogenous group.

The intergroup diversity strand exposes students to the human, racial, and ethnic diversity existent in American society. It approaches the development of American society as a "multi-directional and geo-cultural phenomenon,"[4] i.e., American society developed from many directions in different areas due to the efforts of different national and cultural groups. For example, students learn about the Anglo pilgrims in the Northeast along with the Hispanics in the Southwest when early colonization of the United States is studied. The strand provides students with a perspective to counter biases and stereotypes about majority and minor groups because all groups are represented as inter-related partners in the development of American society.

The "I" framework is explicated by the guidelines that follow. They are offered as points of departure for discussion and exchange of views. Following the guidelines are resources useful for the development of a multiethnic dimension in bilingual-bicultural education.

1. Mexican American culture should be the base of the bilingual-bicultural program. Mexican American students should be able to make the home-to-school transition with a minimum of anxiety. This is possible if the program reflects Mexican American culture in the United States. Linkages to Mexico and Mexican culture should be made, but Mexican culture should not replace or substitute for Mexican American culture. For example, at Christmas time some Mexican American students would identify more with

the performance of pastores (traditional Hispanic Christmas pagaents) than with a traditional Mexican piñata party. Curriculum materials for grades K-6 based on Mexican American culture exist.

2. Mexican American culture should be mediated through the student's dominant language. Mexican American students should begin instruction in their most familiar language, Spanish or English. The students should be well grounded in the language arts skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) of their dominant language before attempting to formally study the second language. By the end of the third or fourth grade, Mexican American students should be able to read and write elementary Spanish and English.

The content of the language arts instruction (Spanish and English) should be Mexican American culture. This would be a good place to use an interdisciplinary approach, combining the language arts and social studies. For example, a geography lesson and reading lesson could be combined by studying Mexican American folktales from different regions of the United States. Contemporary stories about Mexican American families such as Graciela could be used for the same purposes. Arithmetic and reading or listening exercises could be combined. Students could count tortillas and frijoles instead of apples and oranges after reading or listening to sections from Galarza's Barrio Boy where the main character tells of his attempts at learning to count.

3. The study of Mexican American culture should be expanded to teach students its intragroup diversity. While Mexican American students should begin instruction in the home culture, they should be exposed to the variety that exists within Mexican American culture. When studying Spanish, for

example, the regional differences of Mexican American Spanish should be discussed. Some vocabulary items used in Northern New Mexico will differ from those used in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas or in Detroit, Michigan. For example, in Northern New Mexico "sapo" refers to "luck" as in "Que sapo!" (How lucky!). In Texas, "sapo" refers to a "frog." Idioms and verb forms also differ.

Linkages to Mexican Indian influences could be established. Many Mexican American vocabulary items derive from the Mexican Indian language, Nahuatl. For example, chile, elote, mole, pozole, tamal are originally Nahuatl words. Interesting comparisons between Mexican American, Puerto Rican, or Cuban Spanish are possible.

Students should also learn that Mexican American culture is racially diverse. Blacks and Native Americans are inter-twined in Mexican American culture. Basic to the culture is the mestizo or the racial mix between the caucasc:an Spaniards and Mexican Indians. Mexican Indian developments in agricultural systems, agronomy, mathematics, and architecture are only a few of the major contributions made by them to Mexican American culture. Black explorers accompanied the early Spanish explorers. Later, during the Southwestern cattle drive and ranching era, Black cowboys rode along with the Mexican vaqueros (cowboys) as partners. Useful resources here are the Indian Historical Society's Wee Wish Tree, Ebony, Jr., and La Luz Magazine.

4. The study of Anglo American culture should be expanded to teach students the intergroup diversity of American society. Rather than studying only the puritan and pilgrim heritage of Anglo-Americans, Mexican Americans should be exposed to the various national and ethnic groups who immigrated

to the country. Folk tales, legends, and myths describing ethnic group experiences have been recorded. Stories such as Farewell to Manzanar could be used to develop empathy toward Japanese Americans. The students should be guided through multiethnic experiences that represent the interdependency of American citizens. For example, in the Southwest French trappers and German farmers transmitted dances, songs, and legends that appear in Mexican American polkas, music, and folklore. Here the National Council for the Social Studies' Curriculum Guidelines for Multiethnic Education would be especially useful. The NCSS publication outlines in detail the necessary ingredients for multiethnic permeation.

In summary, the base of the framework and guidelines is Mexican American culture. The culture is mediated through Spanish and English. Both languages are used to teach the intragroup diversity of Mexican American culture and the intergroup diversity of American society.

BILINGUAL AND MULTIETHNIC RESOURCES

Books

James Banks. Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1975.

A seminal text that provides concepts and strategies for multiethnic education. Contains excellent chapters and resources for teaching the ethnic experience of Asian, Black, Chicano, and Native Americans.

Carlos Cortes. Understanding You and Them: Tips for Teaching About Ethnicity. Boulder: Social Science Consortium, 1976.

A basic text on ethnicity as it applies to classroom teaching and learning. Clarifies issues regarding ethnicity, ethnic, and cultural groups. Contains many helpful suggestions for teaching ethnic minoirty students.

Ricardo Garcia. Learning in Two Languages: Bilingual-Bicultural Education. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation, 1975.

Provides an overview of bilingual-bicultural education and shows how to organize and implement a bilingual-bicultural program.

Guidelines and Resource Manuals

Curriculum Guidelines for Multiethnic Education by National Council for the Social Studies, 1976, $3.50. %NCSS, 1515 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Provides goals, rationale, and guidelines for multiethnic education, K-12. Analysis of guidelines and checklist for guidelines are especially useful.

Multicultural Education and Ethnic Studies in the United States by American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 1976, $4.50. %Ethnic Heritage Center for Teacher Education, AACTE, Number One Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Provides overview on issues regarding multicultural education. Provides annotated bibliography of ERIC resources on multicultural education.

Guide for Improving Public School Practices in Human Rights, by Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation, 1975, $3.00. %PDK, Eight and Union, Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

A superb resource manual. Provides overview on human rights and multi-cultural education. Provides actual lessons and units on how to teach human rights as well as thorough multi-media bibliography.

Bilingual or Multiethnic Materials Developers

Asian American Studies Center
Box 24A43
Los Angeles, California 94104

(BABEL) Bay Area Bilingual Education League
Berkeley Unified School District
1414 Walnut Street
Berkeley, California 94709

Bilingual Education Services
P. O. Box 669
1508 Oxley Street
South Pasadena, California 91030

Atzlan Journal of Chicano Social Studies

Chicano Studies Center
University of California
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024

Council on Interracial Books for Children
1841 Broadway
New York, New York 10023

Dissemination Center for Bilingual Bicultural Education
6504 Tracor Lane
Austin, Texas 78721

Early Childhood Bilingual Education
Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Ueshiva University
55 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10003

Ebony, Jr.

Johnson Publishing Company
820 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605

Indian Historical Society
1451 Masonic Avenue
San Francisco, California 94117

La Luz Publications
8000 East Girand, Suite 314
Denver, Colorado 80231

Puerto Rican Research and Resource Center
1529 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Racism and Sexism Resource Center
Room 300
1841 Broadway
New York, New York 10023

Information on Federal Programs

Bilingual Programs:

Dr. John Molina, Director
Bureau of Bilingual Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Multiethnic Programs:

Mr. Carl Epstein, Director
Ethnic Heritage Studies Branch
Division of International Education
USOE
Washington, DC 20202

Check also with the State Department of Education in your state.

Footnotes

[1]U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. A Better Chance to Learn: Bilingual-Bicultural Education (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, May 1975), p. 10

[2]A Better Chance to Learn, p. 20

[3]Jose Vasconcelos and M. Gamio. Aspects of Mexican Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926).

[4]Carlos Cortes. "Need for a Geo-cultural Perspective in the Bicentennial," Educational Leadership, 33 (January 1976), 290-292.